

“JUST NOT RIGHT”

Although many individuals are not able to tell us with words how they feel or what exactly is bothering them, they can and do frequently tell us by the way they act or the with sounds they make. Often, it is the direct care provider who knows the individuals the best and is able to pick up small changes that could be signs of illness. When such changes happen, direct service providers often describe the individual as “not right,” “something is wrong,” or they are “not themselves.” How the change is described to a physician will make a difference in the physician’s ability to understand the value of the observation, figure out what the problem is, and to treat it.

When you notice that someone is “just not right,” it may be helpful to think about describing your observations by comparing them to how the individual usually behaves or appears. When you look at the person or think about what you are seeing, what is different from what you usually see?

- Does he or she have a **different look on their face**, such as tired, afraid, or in pain?
- Are they sitting or **moving differently**, such as protecting a hand or foot, refusing to take a position that is normal for him/her?
- Is there a **change in the type of sounds** a person is making? Are they more highly pitched? Or perhaps they are not making any sounds at all.
- What is their **temperature**?
- What is their **breathing** like?
- What is their **color** like? Pale or red? Blue around the lips?
- Have you seen this before? When? What was going on?
- Has there been a recent **new medication**, adjustment to medication or diagnosis that might help explain the change?
- Sometimes a **significant change** in a person’s life or relationships will cause behavioral or physical signs. Has there been a death, loss of a person, or a change in routine?
- Are they **eating and drinking differently**? How is this different than their usual pattern?
- Is there a **change in their bowel or bladder** habits?
- Has there been a **change** in their willingness or **ability to participate in activities**?
- **When** did you notice this change? Did it just start today, or has this been a gradual change?

IF YOU SHOULD NOTICE CHANGES, WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

Call 911 if:

- The change is very sudden.
- The person looks very sick.
- The person is difficult to arouse.

In other situations:

- Call or talk to your supervisor or nurse about what you see or hear.
- Write down what you see or hear and share the information with other staff.
- Make a physician appointment.
- Take notes of what you and other staff see and hear with you to the Dr.’s appointment to assist the physician in diagnosing the problem.

